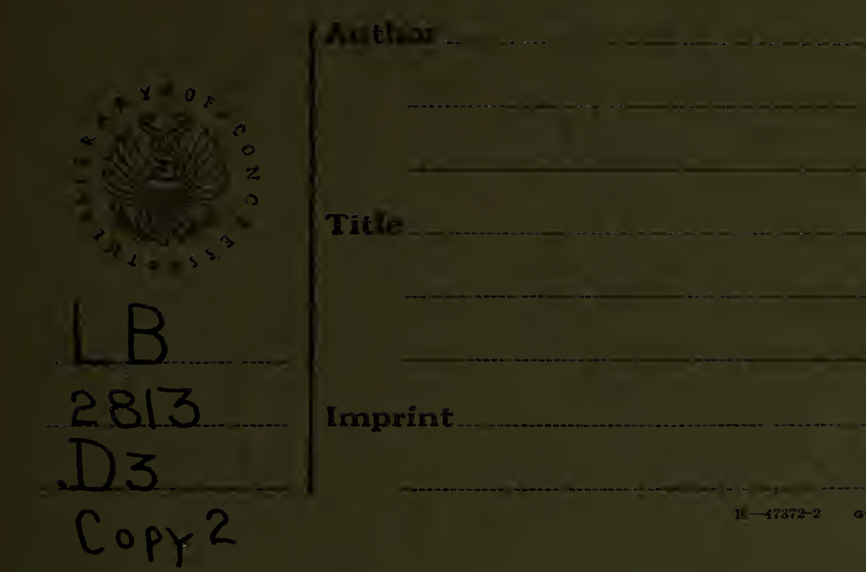


University of Texas Bulletin
No. 2226: July 8, 1922

County Unit of School Administration in Texas

BY

E. E. DAVIS
Specialist in Rural Education
Bureau of Extension

In Collaboration with

T. H. SHELBY
Director of the Bureau of Extension



PUBLISHED BY
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
AUSTIN

Publications of the University of Texas

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The benefits of education and of useful knowledge, generally diffused through a community, are essential to the preservation of a free government.

Sam Houston

Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy. . . . It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security that freemen desire.

Mirabeau B. Lamar

CONTENTS

PAGE

Chapter I. The Place of the County in Public School Finance ---------- 1

Chapter II. The County Unit of School Administration in the United States---------- 20

Chapter III. The Office of County Superintendent in Texas ---------- 29

Chapter IV. The County Board of Education---------- 45

Chapter V. The District Board of School Trustees-- 54

Chapter VI. Summary of the Advantages of the County Unit System Over the District System of School Control---------- 58

CHAPTER I

THE PLACE OF THE COUNTY IN PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCES

1. Stating the Case

(a) *The Case of Travis County, Texas.* Austin, the capital of Texas, is located near the center of Travis County. The western part of Travis County is mountainous and very sparsely settled. The land is very poor. Most of it is used for goat pasture and is rendered to the tax assessor at two dollars per acre. In general, the people are of the mountaineer type and possess much physical hardihood. But most of them are very poor.

In the heart of this mountainous territory, just fifteen miles from the magnificent dome of the state capitol at Austin, is the Pleasant Valley School District. In the summer of 1919 the people of the Pleasant Valley community voted bonds to the amount of $2,000 to build a new modern two-room schoolhouse. The people were unanimous in their desire for a better school for their red-blooded mountaineer children. They were simply crying out for better educational facilities.

When the bonds reached the Attorney General's office for inspection, they could not be approved. They were rejected because the total taxable wealth of the district was so very small that only $500 in bonds could be legally issued against it. The new schoolhouse was not built. A veritable old stable was provided with a new roof, a new floor, and an extra window or two, and school is being conducted there today. In this district, a fifty-cent school tax produces only $91.83 per year, which is only $4.84 per child of free-school age. On the other hand, in some of the wealthy farming districts in the eastern part of the county, a fifty-cent tax produces more than $20 per child.

Adjacent to the Pleasant Valley district are the Cox Springs District, the Travis Peak District and a number of others that are very poor in material wealth. Private Simpson, one of the greatest heroes of the World War,

came from this poverty-stricken locality. In a single-handed fight he captured a German machine gun in a shell hole in No Man's Land, turned it on the enemy's columns and cut them down like weeds before a scythe as they advanced across the level terrain. Three times he turned them back in utter route, holding them off for an entire afternoon, while the broken ranks of his comrades were being reformed. He was decorated for bravery by the French government and again decorated by the people of Austin when he returned home.

The gods were kind in their gift of body and mind to this unobtrusive "squirrel shooter" from the hills of Travis County. But Travis County and the State of Texas have been derelict in their duty of providing him with the opportunities for an education. Though there reside in him the God-given possibilities of a great and useful man, today he can scarcely read and write the English language, his mother tongue. He is a wood chopper and a day laborer in his home community, incapable of putting his unusual powers to use as an able community benefactor. If the government has the right to draft Private Simpson for military service, it is morally obligated to provide him and all his mountaineer neighbors and their children with better educational advantages.

The benefits of free and equal educational privileges are not being uniformly provided for all the people of Travis County. This condition will continue as it is so long as the ad valorem tax of the school district is the chief source of school support. Our system is at fault. The county, as well as the school district, should be one of the units of taxation for school purposes. In every county of Texas the wealthier districts, the railroads and other corporations should help provide better schools for the poorer districts.

(b) *The Farm-Tenant Community Dominated by Absentee Landlords.* Four years ago twenty-three farm tenants signed a petiton for a school tax election in a common school district in one of the wealthiest black-land counties of Texas. Five non-resident landlords objected. The tax was defeated in the election that followed. Then, in order

to have a six months' term of school, sixteen of the tenants by mutual consent assessed themselves $7.50 for each team of horses or mules used in their farm operations. In this way they raised $157.50. They applied $27.50 of this amount to repairs on the old schoolhouse. The remaining $130 provided two months of salary for the teacher who tried to teach the forty-seven children in that community for one-hundred and twenty days during the school year of 1915-1916.

Until outside assistance is given to some farm-tenant communities in Texas now economically helpless because of artificial pressure over which they have no control, their schools must continue in a state of most abject squalor. A county-wide school tax would do much toward the amelioration of this unfortunate condition.

(c) *The Rich District with an Abundance of Wealth Produced by no Effort of Its Own.* One of the largest oil companies in the country recently located a great tank farm within the confines of a certain common-school district. It has constructed more than one hundred gigantic reservoirs containing thousands of barrels of oil worth millions of dollars. This school district has had wealth literally thrust upon it. A tax rate insignificantly small produces an abundance of revenue for the school.

In another common-school district an oil field has been recently developed. Land that had a commercial value of less than forty dollars per acre before the discovery of oil has since brought as high as ten thousand dollars per acre. It now looks as if this common-school district will be obliged to reduce its tax rate to possibly as little as one cent on the one hundred dollars in order to avoid the accumulation of more school revenues than it knows what to do with.

In the northern part of a certain East Texas county the virgin pines are still standing. There are thousands of them straight as arrows and one hundred feet tall. This uncut timber has a commercial value of from $100 to $400 per acre. A fifteen-cent tax often produces all the school funds that are needed. But in the southern part of this

same county the pines have been cut away and manufactured into lumber and cross-ties. The land, now covered with sage grass and dead pine stumps, is worth about $15 per acre. Many of the country schools are starving for funds because a fifty-cent tax, or a dollar tax, does not produce sufficient revenue to give them competent teachers and adequate equipment.

Mines, oil fields, refineries, factories, timber lands, railroads, pipelines, and all other forms of wealth should be made to participate uniformly in the support of the free schools of our land. This uniformity can never be possible so long as the school district remains the chief source of financial support for our free schools. A county-wide tax for the support of public education would do much to correct many of the inequalities and injustices that now exist in the financial support of the free schools of Texas.

2. The County As A Unit of Taxation for School Purposes

Ignorance is a menace to any community. Even the educated are badly handicapped when they have ignorant neighbors. In self-defense, the cultured and the wealthy must help the ignorant and the poor to become educated. An educational system is badly at fault when it permits a portion of a county or a portion of a state to produce ignorant, inefficient people to be turned loose on the rest of the state. In the future, the county and the state must give more financial succor to the free schools of the improvident districts and townships. Education is for the good of all. The persons, the corporations, and the centers of wealth that would profit from all the advantages arising from general culture and public education without doing their share in defraying the expenses of the free schools are covetous, shortsighted and unpatriotic. They are poor subjects for a free government.

To maintain schools in the country as good as those of the towns and cities would require a much higher tax rate for the rural tax payer than for the city tax payer. This is

because the per capita wealth is greater in the urban centers than in the rural districts. Railroad terminals, warehouses, office buildings, expensive hotels, banks, and all sorts of factories and other commercial establishments have made the cities great centers of wealth. This gives the school districts at the industrial centers along the railroads a tremendous financial advantage over the school districts of the country.

Again, we must not forget that it costs relatively more to maintain a small school in a sparsely settled community than it does to maintain a large school in a populous district. The burden of support is much greater when ten taxpayers have to maintain a $1,000 school than it is when fifty taxpayers maintain a $3,000 school. In the future, if we would have all the people equally well educated, the greater part of the funds with which to educate them will have to be derived from state and county taxation. The wealthier portions of each county must help the poorer portions maintain a uniformly good system of schools for the good of all.

It is eminently just that the industrial centers of great wealth should help educate the children of the poorer communities. The country people are producers of raw material and consumers of finished goods. They have helped build the cities. They also help maintain them. The cities are making a continuous profit off of the country people in two transactions, viz., when they purchase raw supplies from them, and when they sell finished articles to them. Without the country and the country people, the cities and the great industrial centers could not exist. It is right that the wealth of the city and the wealth of the country should participate uniformly in the educating of all the children for the common good.

For the poorer districts, under present conditions, there is little hope. Short school terms and poor schoolhouses are their inevitable lot so long as the district system lasts. Until the possibilites of the county system can be realized there will continue to be school districts lying side by side, the one having a model school plant and the other the poorest

sort of schoolhouse. Under a highly developed county system with the county board of education in charge of all the schools of the county, and with a county tax for school equipment and school maintenance, the opportunities for education in the poorer districts can be greatly improved.

3. The Case of Wichita County, Texas

Figure No. 1 on page 11 shows the financial condition of the rural schools of Wichita County as it exists under the present district system of financial support. The striking thing about this figure is that the districts with the highest school tax rates have the smallest amounts of school funds and those with the lowest school tax rates have the largest amounts of school funds. Notice that Districts Nos. 13, 16 and 22 have had to reduce their tax rates from 50 cents to 5 cents, 20 cents, and 20 cents, respectively, in order to keep from having more school funds than they can use. On the other hand, Districts Nos. 23, 24, and 25 with tax rates of 100 cents, 100 cents, and 90 cents, respectively, came out in debt at the end of the school year.

The county as an intermediate unit of school support between the district and the state would tend to equalize the costs and the opportunities of education among all of the districts in the county. As it now stands, the poor districts are paying more and the rich districts are paying less than their just shares of the cost of public education in the county. The richer the district the lower its school tax rate and the poorer the district the higher its school tax rate. The wealth per school child in Wichita County varies from $3,623 in District No. 23 to $17,127 in District No. 16. The school tax rate in District No. 23 is 100 cents, while in District No. 16 it is only 20 cents. Last year the district with the 20 cent tax had a balance of $119.45 per school child left in the school treasury at the close of the school, while the district with the 100 cent tax had a deficit of $8.93 per child when school closed. Conditions similar to this exist in a great many other counties of Texas.

Number of District	Balances per Scholastic Brought Forward to 1921-22	Number of District	Tax Rates for 1921-22
1	$.00	1	50c
2	$39.07	2	50c
3	.77	3	50c
5	$.27	5	50c
6	$16.44	6	30c
7	$13.14	7	40c
8	$4.10	8	40c
9	$1.73	9	50c
10	$7.64	10	50c
11	$2.18 (Over draft)	11	50c
12	$16.22	12	50c
13	$44.52	13	5c
14	$7.60	14	50c
15	$19.18	15	15c
16	$119.45	16	20c
17	$22.82	17	40c
19	$12.96	19	40c
20	$17.76	20	50c
21	$9.95	21	40c
22	$46.46	22	20c
23	$8.93 (Over draft)	23	$1.00
24	$3.01 (Over draft)	24	$1.00
25	$9.21 (Over draft)	25	90c
26	$33.80	26	50c
27	$26.91	27	50c
28	$22.33	28	50c

FIGURE No. 1

Balances in Treasury and Tax Rates in Wichita County School District for 1921-22

(Note.—The broken lines indicate that the diagram was not large enough to give the full length.)

4. The School District As a Necessary Unit of School Finances Within the County

If we had an ideal system of public education, most of the funds for its support would come from state and county taxation. As has already been shown, this would accomplish two things, viz., (1) It would make the school tax rates more uniform throughout the state; (2) It would provide equal educational advantages for all the children. The weaker districts would be given a better chance, and the means for developing a uniformly good citizenship in all parts of the state would be greatly improved. But no district, however poor, should ever be entirely exempt from the necessity of a school tax. It is good for the district to feel the responsibility for its schools.

For the entire support of public education to fall upon the state and county would be a decided mistake. To a certain extent, Texas made that mistake long ago. In an early day, even in the days of the Republic prior to 1845, the creation of our magnificent school fund was begun. The idea then was to endow public education permanently and sufficiently for all time to come, so that in the future tax levies for school purposes would be unnecessary. This was a great help to public education during the rugged days prior to the Civil War and for fully two decades following that fateful event. But contemporaneously with the good it produced, one very disastrous result grew out of it, viz., a feeling on the part of many communities of total dependence upon the state for educational support. Thus, Texas pauperized her schools in the beginning. Like helpless orphans, many of them still look to the State for support. They are lacking in the independence and the spiritual robustness that self-effort gives.

A considerable amount of self-exertion is necessary to keep up the *esprit de corps* of a school community. Communities, like individuals, appreciate most the things they help pay for. For that reason, it would be poor statesmanship to dispense entirely with the school district as a unit for school taxation. It is good for the school district to be

called upon to supplement the state and county funds. It is good for the district school tax to appear as a separate item, "Special School Tax," as it does, in the bills presented to the taxpayers by the county tax collectors in Texas. When people pay for schools they do so as much out of their state of mind as out of their purses. Therein consists one of the greatest benefits arising from a local school tax. It stimulates educational consciousness among all the laymen when all are required to help pay the community's educational bills.

Van Zandt County is one of the very few counties of Texas wherein every school district in the county has voted a fifty-cent school tax. In some respects it is one of the banner rural school counties of Texas. Yet a recent visit to that county shows that one of the basic needs of the rural schools of the county is a greater degree of local financial support. Through low renditions many of the most prosperous farming communities are doing very little for public education. For example, for the school year of 1920-1921 the Wallace School received $2,187.50 from the State of Texas and raised only $509 through local taxation; the Watkins School received $2,370.50 from the State and raised $842 in local school taxes; the Edom School received $2,823.50 from the State and raised $623 in local school taxes; the Myrtle Springs School received $2,916 from the State and raised $958 by local taxation.

Under an ideal system properly fortified with state and county funds, it should never become necessary for any school district to impose upon itself a greater tax rate than one dollar for school purposes. But a wide gulf separates the real from the ideal in all that pertains to the public schools of Texas. For that reason, public education in Texas will have to learn to rely more upon local effort and in all probability it will have to keep up the practice for a long time to come.

5. More Equitable Methods of Raising and Disbursing State and County School Revenues

(a) *Our State Ad Valorem School Taxes.* There is a frightful lack of uniformity in the amounts of advalorem school taxes paid by the various counties of Texas. Some counties pay more than their share; others pay less. This is due to a lack of uniformity in the assessment of property values by the county tax assessors. For example, farming land in one county is assessed at twenty-five dollars per acre while farming land of exactly the same character just beyond the fence in another county is assessed at forty dollars per acre. In one county the tax assessor was standing for re-election and trying to curry favor with the voters, while the tax assessor in the adjoining county was less inclined to play politics.

Aside from political reasons, it is the policy of most all tax assessors in Texas to protect the counties against their proportionate shares of the state taxes by permitting low renditions. By comparing the true values of land given in the Thirteenth Census in 1910 with the report of the State Comptroller in 1911, some startling facts are revealed. For example, six counties showed an assessed valuation of as much as 90 per cent of their true value; seven counties between 80 and 90 per cent; thirteen between 70 and 80 per cent; twenty-seven between 60 and 70 per cent; forty-three between 50 and 60 per cent; sixty-four between 40 and 50 per cent; thirty-nine between 30 and 40 per cent; thirty between 20 and 30 per cent; and six below 20 per cent. The wealthier counties, the famed black-land counties, as a rule, render their lands and buildings at less than fifty per cent of their true value. Five of the six counties rendering as much as 90 per cent of their true values are in East Texas and have comparatively small population and wealth.*

Under the present system, the burden of state advalorem school taxes can never be distributed uniformly among the

*Miller, E. T., A Financial History of Texas, Bull. of the University of Texas, 1916, No. 37, pp. 278-79.

counties according to their respective abilities to pay. All taxes for state purposes should be levied against assessments uniformly made by some non-partisan state board instead of by the great army of politically incumbered county tax assessors. This would not only be more just than the present system, but it should be more economical. There would not be any need or justification for the office of county tax assessor, for in making the tax levies, each county could use the valuations made by the state board.

(b) *The Apportionment of School Funds According to Scholastic Population Is Founded Upon a Wrong Theory.* Legislators have assumed that scholastic population is a true index of a community's educational needs. This is a false assumption. It ignores the element of ability. Two factors must be considered in determning a community's educational needs: (1) The number of children to be educated; (2) The community's ability to educate them.

There may be two communities with one hundred children each. In so far as the number of children is concerned, the educational needs of the two communities are the same. But one community may contain five times as much wealth as the other. Consequently, the poorer community's need for state aid is five times as great as that of the wealthier community. The apportionment of state school funds according to school population would only serve to accentuate the advantage already enjoyed by the wealthier community. The better plan would be to apportion state and county school funds on the double basis of: (1) need; (2) school attendance.

(c) *Many School Districts in Texas Are Receiving a Premium from the State for Keeping Children out of School.* In Southwest Texas there are many small schools attended by white children only and supported almost entirely by state funds apportioned to Mexican children who do not go to school. For example, there were thirty-seven white children in a country school taught by two teachers. There were, at the same time, more than one hundred Mexican children residing in the district but not in school. That school was a pauper and a loafer—an educational parasite

on the State of Texas. With but one-half or one-fourth of the children in attendance, the state apportionment is often sufficient to sustain the school for those who do attend.

That the abuses of non-attendance are not restricted to a few isolated cases, but hold throughout entire counties, is shown by the following figures taken from the annual reports of the county superintendents of Texas for the school year of 1919-1920. The average daily attendance of the children of free-school age in some of the counties with the heaviest Mexican population was as follows: Cameron 30.1 per cent; Hidalgo 23.8 per cent; Zapata 32.1 per cent; Maverick 12.4 per cent; Nueces 35.4 per cent; San Patricio 26.7 per cent; Jim Wells 20.7 per cent; Bastrop 32.5 per cent; Caldwell 37.8 per cent.

In this same group of counties it is interesting to note how much less the annual expenditure per child of school age is than the expenditure per child actually attending school. This great difference is caused by non-attendance. If all the children were in school every day schools are in session, the expenditure per child of free-school age would be exactly the same as the expenditure per child in actual attendance. Column A represents the amount expended per child of school age, and column B represents the amount expended per child in average daily attendance:

	—A—	—B—
Cameron County	$11.95	$48.83
Hidalgo County	13.37	56.04
Zapata County	10.10	31.84
Maverick County	5.80	46.63
Nueces County	26.87	70.58
Jim Wells County	15.85	48.05
Bastrop County	8.52	26,17
Caldwell County	16.57	53.15

When measured by school attendance, the State is receiving very small dividends on its investments in some schools. For illustration, let us take two schools, the Viola School and the Bitter Creek School, with one hundred pupils each. The one hundred pupils of the Viola school attended every day school was in session for eight months, or a total of 16,000

days; but the one hundred children of the Bitter Creek School attended but half of the time for eight months, or a total of only 8,000 days. The State invested the same amount in each of these two schools. But it received twice as much on its investment in the Viola School as it did on its investment in the Bitter Creek School.

State and county school funds should be apportioned to the Viola and the Bitter Creek schools on the basis of total attendance and on the basis of need rather than on the basis of school population. This would place a premium on attendance instead of on non-attendance. The automatic result would be a stricter enforcement of the school attendance laws. Each district would be obliged to keep its children in school in order to participate to the fullest extent in the state free school funds.

Our state school funds should be apportioned among the counties upon the basis of school attendance and financial needs, and then reapportioned by the counties to the school districts upon the same basis. In the example just given, half of the State's investment in the Bitter Creek School was wasted because of non-attendance. That was poor business on the part of the State. State and county school funds should be applied so as to bring the greatest possible returns on the investment in the production of a responsible, intelligent citizenry.

(d) *One-half of the State and County School Funds Should Be Apportioned to the School Districts on the Basis of Need.* All state and county school funds should be divided into two parts: one to be apportioned among the districts on the basis of school attendance, and the other on the basis of financial need and reward for effort. In the first place, no school district should be allowed to share in the state and county school funds until it has first voted a school tax of not less than fifty cents. Of course, this naturally brings up the question of the backward, obstinate district that would steadfastly refuse to vote the required tax. But that is no difficult matter to handle. It can be easily taken care of in the manner provided on the next page.

One-half of the state and county school funds should first

be apportioned among all the districts on the basis of school attendance. Then, if the wealth of any district should be so great that a local tax of fifty cents or less would provide it with adequate schools, there would be no need or justification for its participation further in the state and county school funds. The wealthiest districts would be eliminated in this way.

The degree of a district's need because of financial inability may be easily computed in the following manner: For example, in order to meet the minimum requirements of the state as to qualifications of teachers, equipment and length of school term, the budget of a certain school district may require $12,000. The local school tax of fifty cents might produce $5,000. The half of the state and county school funds apportioned on the basis of attendance, as previously set forth, might produce $4,000. That district would still need $3,000 in order to meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the state. This need should be met from the remaining half of the unappropriated state and county school funds.

After meeting the requirements set by the state, if a district should desire to vote additional taxes for the further improvement of its schools, it should have the privilege of doing so. This plan would practically guarantee adequate financial support for all the schools of the state, and at the same time put a premium on self-effort and school attendance.

Now for the district that is backward, indifferent, or unwilling to vote a fifty-cent school tax. In the first place, most districts in Texas would vote a fifty-cent school tax rather than have all state support withheld from them. The district so mean and depraved as not to desire a school of some sort can scarcely be found. But should such a district appear, it could be easily provided for by the enactment of a law giving the county board of education the power to have it absorbed into some other district by the process of consolidation. Then the tax rate of the progressive district with which it is consolidated would be automatically extended over the backward, recalcitrant district, and it would

thus become eligible to all the rights and privileges pertaining to the state free school system.

(e) *The Case of California.* In California, state and county school funds are apportioned upon a double basis: (1) The number of teachers employed; (2) the school attendance of the previous year. Each year, before the apportionments are made, the city and county superintendents are required to calculate the number of teachers necessary for their respective jurisdictions, on the basis of one teacher for each thirty-five pupils in average daily attendance the previous year. Then the apportionment of $800 per teacher is made. All state and county school moneys then remaining on hand are apportioned among the several districts in proportion to the number of pupils in average daily attendance the preceding year.

A new amendment to the state constitution of California provides that the state shall contribute not less than $30 for each pupil in average daily atendance in the elementary and high schools. The counties must raise at least $30 for each pupil in average daily attendance in the elementary schools and at least $60 for each pupil in average daily attendance in the high schools. For the school year of 1920-1921, the State of Texas appropriated only $14.50 for each child, and that is the most liberal appropriation it has ever made for its free schools.

Another observation that Texas might do well to make is that the average salary paid to the public school teachers of California for the school year of 1917-1918 was $1,052 compared with $487 for Texas for the same year.* Can it be wondered at that the teaching profession in Texas contains so many young boys and girls and other weaklings.

In California the schools are supported largely by state and county funds, and eight months of school are required in all districts. The California system does two things: (1) It seeks to provide an adequate number of well-trained teachers; (2) It stimulates effort to get children into school and keep them in regular attendance.

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*Bonner, R. H., Statistics of State School Systems for 1917-1918, Bull. U. S. Bureau of Education, 1920, No. 11, p. 42.

CHAPTER II

THE COUNTY UNIT OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Rural education in the United States has three administrative units, the local district, the intermediate unit, and the state, with final authority vested in the latter. The intermediate unit may be a supervisory or administrative district as in New York and New England, or a parish or county as in Louisiana and Texas. The functions of this intermediate unit vary greatly throughout the Union. In a study recently made of the intermediate unit in New York State, it is pointed out that "the present office of county superintendent, almost universally a feature of the intermediate unit, evolved from lay boards which were, it seems, clearly intermediate in their character. ......The transition was in general completed in the reorganization of the school system of the Southern States which followed the reconstruction period. More recently there has been a decided trend......to the association of a lay board and a professional officer or staff."*

For purposes of this study it is needless to go into the intermediate unit in the various states. As pointed out by Dr. Brooks in the study quoted above, the trend throughout the United States is to employ a professional officer who works within rather narrow statutory limits under control of a lay board. The tendency is decidedly in the direction of general lay control, such lay board being elected by the people. The tendency furthermore is to have this lay board to elect the expert professional officer, fix his salary and hold him directly responsible for the administration of the schools of his territory. "This combination of professional service and lay control is the basis on which our unequalled

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*Brooks, Thomas Dudley: The Lay Element in the Intermediate Unit of State School Systems. Waco: Baylor University, Bulletin. Vol. XXV, Number 1, p. 1.

American urban school systems have developed."* Professor Brooks points out that in the county system states, as distinguished from the states having the supervisory district or supervisory union system, two types of administration or control are found, viz., the county board type or the county officer type with the trend decidedly in the direction of the former. "In some of the states in which a county board is provided, the county unit form of administration is adopted, in which almost all of the administration and supervision of the schools of the county are performed by the county board and its professional officer or officers, few of the original functions being left to the district. In other cases the county board serves to furnish a more or less comprehensive program of supervision and to perform such other administrative functions as the local district clearly cannot perform effectively for itself. Twenty-six states have one or the other of these types of county boards of education, usually known by that name.......In ten states, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Lousiana, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah, county boards have been assigned most of the powers formerly held by the local trustees and these systems represent the 'County unit' plan."* It is noteworthy that all except two of these states are in the South.

It is not within the province of this bulletin to discuss the operation of the "County unit" system, in the various states where it has been in operation. It is interesting to observe, however, how it has operated in two typical southern states, namely, Alabama and Lousiana.

The Parish Unit in Louisiana

In Louisiana, the parish (county) has an overlapping board elected by the voters of the parish for a term of six years. The board has complete control of all the schools in the parish, including those of any cities which may be located in the parish. Only two cities in the state, Lake

*Ibid. p. 6.

*Ibid. p. 7.

Charles and Monroe, enjoy independence in the administration of their schools.

The parish board elects a parish superintendent from anywhere within or without the state, subject to the qualifications prescribed by the State Board of Education. In a recent address before the Conference on Education, Citizenship and Home Welfare held at the University of Texas, Mr. T. H. Harris, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, said, "The parish superintendent has never been elected by popular vote in Louisiana. It is the opinion of the people of our state, and I think this is true of laymen as well as school men, that no more unfortunate method of selecting the executive head of a local school system could be devised." Mr. Harris further said: "A small board, the majority of the members of which have been in office for a number of years and are more or less familiar with the needs and requirements of education can quietly and dispassionately look the field over and make a better selection for the office of superintendent that can possibly be made by all of the voters in an election...... We think we have made some substantial progress in the development of our schools, and I believe that no one familiar with the situation would think of questioning the fact that our progress has been due, in great measure, to the fine caliber of the men who have filled the office of superintendent in the various parishes. Their leadership has been sane and progressive and they were obligated to no individual and to no political faction." The parish superintendent is not only elected by the parish board, but is moreover its executive officer and professional adviser. In accordance with law and requirements prescribed by the State Department of Education, he works under the board and makes reports to the board.

The board classifies schools, consolidates school districts, establishes high schools where they are needed, elects teachers, levies parish-wide taxes for school support and has general supervision of the expenditure of all school funds. Under such an arrangement the burden of school support is properly distributed and educational opportunity is equalized.

Lousiana's progress under the "county unit" system has been noteworthy. High schools have been generously distributed within reach of the country boys and girls. A school term of nine months has been provided in all schools, school supervisors have been employed in most of the parishes. Through this means teaching has been greatly improved and efficient education is being placed within reach of all the children. Thus a state with relatively very much more limited resources than Texas, under the county unit plan, has forged to the front and is now recognized as having the best school system of any of the southern states.

The County Unit and School Progress in Alabama

In 1915, the county board of education in Alabama counties was given full control of all schools outside of the incorporated towns of two thousand population and over. A questionnaire asking for the following information was sent to all county superintendents in April, 1921: Consolidations made from 1909 to 1915 and from 1915 to 1921? Teachers' homes built from 1909 to 1915 and from 1915 to 1921? Total school libraries in county in 1915 and in 1921? Pupils transported to school in 1915 and 1921? These questions were selected because it was thought they would be typical indications of progress.

Forty-six county superintendents answered the inquiries.

TABLE No. 1

SCHOOL PROGRESS IN ALABAMA IN THREE ITEMS INDICATED, 1909-'15 AND 1915-'21

County	Consolidations		Teachers Homes Built		Total School Libraries		Pupils Transported	
	09-15	15-21	09-15	15-21	1915	1921	1915	1921
Houston	0	0	0	0	30	36	0	25
St. Clair	0	6	0	0	9	35	0	0
DeKalb	0	5	0	1	10	100	0	120
Pike	—	3	—	—	25	30	—	125
Wilcox	0	3	0	0	—	9	0	125

Lamar	?	4	0	0	8	39	15	52
Madison	0	12	0	2	40	80	0	1400
Coffee	0	0	0	2	3	15	0	100
Dale	0	3	0	1	22	48	0	110
Lawrence	0	0	0	2	10	49	0	0
Conecuh	0	6	0	2	6	26	0	350
Walker	0	2	0	0	—	30	0	25
Lauderdale	1	10	0	3	5	60	0	150
Cullam	0	10	0	0	6	63	0	0
Jefferson	1	20	0	23	70	130	40	1834
Mobile	7	11	0	0	39	32	223	1113
Monroe	0	10	0	2	10	57	0	500
Butler	0	4	0	0	12	70	0	150
Washington	0	3	0	1	?	15	0	110
Cleburne	—	—	—	—	25	30	—	—
Chilton	0	3	0	0	35	40	0	26
Talledega	0	6	0	0	30	34	0	346
Morgan	0	5	0	3	70	20	0	Few
Lowndes	9	1	1	0	6	6	0	0
Baldwin	0	10	0	2	50	150	0	200
Chambers	0	6	0	1	20	150	0	350
Coosa	0	3	0	0	20	30	0	0
Pickens	0	2	0	0	4	8	0	80
Clarke	0	—	0	0	10	38	0	0
Covington	0	0	0	0	—	—	0	0
Franklin	0	2	0	0	12	33	0	350
Green	6	3	0	0	8	15	0	0
Marion	0	5	0	1	—	?	0	43
Crenshaw	0	1	0	0	10	24	0	35
Blount	0	0	0	0	0	10	0	0
Hale	0	0	1	0	3	14	0	0
Geneva	0	5	0	0	2	14	0	8
Fayette	2	3	0	1	10	15	0	40
Clay	0	10	0	1	20	48	0	0
Lee	4	—	0	—	—	—	0	150
Bullock	0	5	0	0	—	20	0	105
Montgomery	0	11	0	2	—	20	0	650
Barbour	1	—	0	—	—	—	0	85
Jackson	0	2	1	—	20	40	0	65
Randolph	0	4	0	1	20	69	0	220
Ethowa	0	6	0	0	30	50	0	0
Totals	31	205	3	51	680	1801	278	9042

Table No. 1 gives the results of this study. The progress in all items is notable especially when it is considered that the period covered by the last series of years was the World War period. A number of the county superintendents in commenting on progress under the new law suggested that more progress would have been made but for the conditions incident to the War.

It should be noted that only 31 consolidations are reported as having taken place from 1909 to 1915, while 205 were effected from 1915 to 1921, an increase of 561 per cent. Only three teacherages were erected during the first period while 51 were erected during the period covered by the county unit. Another important index to progress is the establishment of school libraries. Only in this way can the enriched curriculum be put into successful operation and school work come to be other than a mere textbook-reciting procedure. There was an increase of 164 per cent from 681 to 1801 for the periods covered by this report.

Transportation goes hand in hand with consolidation and the establishment of good schools. This activity is also very intimately connected with the building of good roads. Only three counties had any transportation from 1909 to 1915, and the total number of pupils transported was 278. For the next six year period, 31 of the 46 counties reporting indicated that pupils were transported, the total number being 9042.

Comments of county superintendents are interesting. Each comment quoted is made by a different official:

"Consolidation delayed by war and depression."

"County unit makes for unification and progress."

"People waking up to advantages of consolidation."

"New buildings erected during past two years almost equalled the entire school valuation before the change. We are handicapped by bad roads but over 100 children now have access to high school that did not have it before. There are a number of other advantages that could be set forth. Our county is rural in every sense. Salaries increased over 50 per cent, one-teacher schools reduced 33 per cent and many other items of similar nature."

"Wonderful improvement over district unit."

"The progress has been remarkable in schoolhouse construction and increase in funds. Our funds have more than doubled in this time and about twenty modern school houses built. We also have supervision."

"The county system is a great advantage for the schools."

"We have a county containing 801 square miles with 107 school districts. We are now attempting to reduce the number by consolidation to 18."

"To attempt to go to the district plan here would bring on a revolution. Nearly all want the county plan."

"The Mobile City and the Mobile County schools are under the control of one board of education (5 members) with one executive officer. This is the only county in Alabama which has a like system. The Mobile schools were organized prior to the state system which accounts for the schools operating under a special law."

"Our people have been slow to take up the new plan, but now they are becoming very much enthused over it, and another year we will operate on a larger scale in every way."

"Progress in consolidation must necessarily be slow, owing to the increased cost of running the school under conditions such as we have—sparsely settled territory such as ours. But when the quality of instruction is taken into consideration there is no comparison."

"Work is just now beginning in earnest here, but we are planning great improvements in the near future. Roads are not good yet, but being built. Transportation will follow."

"Much progress has been made in this county since the county has been made the unit of control."

"County unit is far better than district plan."

"We have no consolidated schools. We are trying to work up sentiment now. Our real trouble is lack of funds. The county boards have power but not funds. The county unit is far superior to district unit."

"County control is getting results. It is a success."

"Our funds are insufficient to make the progress we would like."

"The work of consolidation is fast taking hold of our rural people and the time will soon be when consolidation where practical will be made."

"We have not built any large consolidated schools but have found it to advantage to eliminate twelve one-teacher schools."

Probably a goodly number of consolidations reported are of the class referred to in the last quotation. The elimination of weak and inefficient one-teacher schools is, however, desirable and can only be effected on any considerable scale under a county unit of administration. So long as the districts are a law unto themselves, so long will many of them continue the small and inefficient institution.

This short study of Alabama, incomplete as it is, indicates clearly the advantages of the county over the district method with respect to the several indices of progress. It is noteworthy, too, that a number of the county superintendents are outspoken in their endorsement of the county unit over the district unit. Not one of the county superintendents made an unfavorable report. A system that has marked such forward movements in Alabama during these years of stress and strain warrants consideration at the hands of our own state.

The necessity of a larger unit of administration than the small district which we usually find in the rural sections is apparent to anyone who will give the matter serious consideration. The conditions are the same whether we consider Alabama, New York, or Texas. Inequalities of wealth inevitably arise as compared with school population. This makes for inequality of educational opportunity or inequality of the burden of support, or both.

Six Years of School Progress in Alabama
(Summarized from Table I)

(Prior to 1915 the schools of Alabama were under the district system of control in much the same way that they

are in Texas today. In 1915 the county was instituted as the unit of school administration and control. This figure compares the school progress made in Alabama from 1909-15, the last six years of the district system of control, with the school progress from 1915-21, the first six years of the county system of control.)

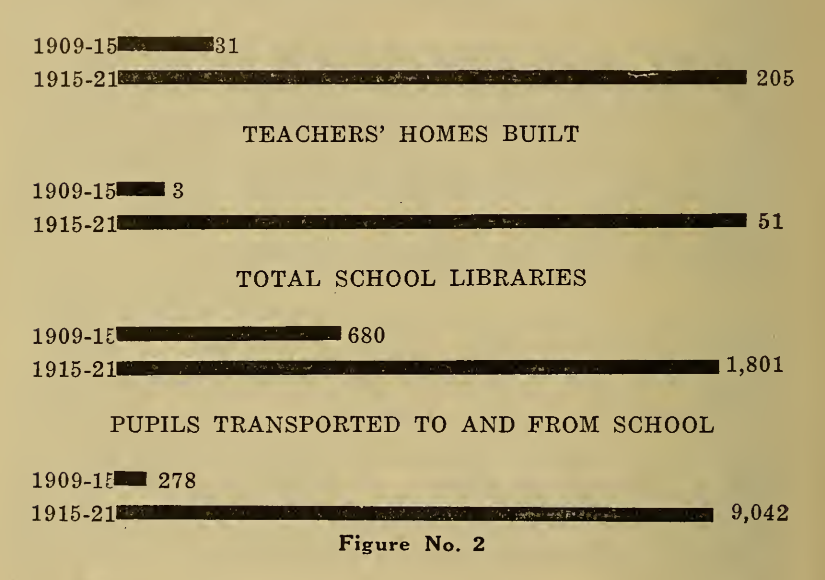


Figure No. 2

CHAPTER III

THE OFFICE OF COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT IN TEXAS

1. Defects in the Present Method of Electing County Superintendents in Texas, and Some Practical Remedies for the Same

(a) *Defects that Are Apparent.*

The substance of a speech made by a county superintendent recently at a convention of county superintendents in Texas ran about as follows:

A person can afford to take up city school supervision as a life career. It offers a career that justifies careful study and thorough preparation before entering upon it. It magnifies educational leadership and professional ability. But this can not be said of the office of county superintendent. It is a political office. It is a spoil for crafty politicians. Our best educators seldom offer for it. They do not have the time to work up in party ranks and establish the acquaintanceship necessary to get the nomination. The days of the county superintendent are few and full of troubles. The office is passed around among the electorate with little regard for professional fitness for it. In a high-school position one knows that if he is successful the reputation gained there will enable him to secure a better place. The same is true of city superintendencies. Such conditions are incentives for persons to do their best. They warrant one in looking forward to a life career in these lines of educational work. But for the county superintendency these conditions do not exist. Defeat at the polls is sure to come at the end of a few years. This usually ends one's career as a county superintendent, for, because of the residence requirements, he is not eligible as a candidate for election in another county.

The election of the county superintendent should be placed in the hands of the county board of education, and the local residence requirements should be abolished. That would tend to place the office of county superintendent on

a plane with that of city superintendent. It would cause more of our able men and women in the teaching profession to take up the very important work of county school supervision.

Occasionally a strong leader may be elected to the office of county superintendent by popular vote. But that is the exception. In general, they do not possess the education or the administrative ability that the chief director of educational thought in a county should have. Our county superintendents in general are not our most representative educators. But they are not to blame for it. They are the products of an imperfect political system. Our city school superintendents would be just as inferior if they were elected by popular vote. Time-serving politicians would soon crowd out the professionally trained men and women.

By popular vote, it would be absurd for a city to expect to obtain a first-class bacteriologist to take charge of its water supply, or a first-class civil engineer to direct the street paving and the installation of the sewer and water mains. Our cities have learned better than that. Technically trained experts are elected by the city commission. It is time for the counties to profit from the examples the cities have set. Skilled administrative experts are seldom obtained by direct popular vote. The better method is to have elective boards appoint them. That is representative democracy. It is the plan big business has universally adopted. It is the principle upon which the success of the commission form of government for cities is based. It is also the principle upon which our best city school system is based.

(b) *The Example of Big Business.* Many of the large business corporations of the country have more than ten thousand stockholders. That number exceeds the electoral vote of most of the counties of Texas. But the head officials of big corporations are not elected by direct vote of the stockholders. The stockholders elect a board of directors from among their number and the board of directors representing the stockholders choose the president and the

heads of all the departments for the corporation. Such a system of administration has proven best for big business. That big business has been a success in this country, no one can deny.

The biggest single piece of business confronting most of the counties of Texas is the education of their boys and girls. In most counties no other undertaking involves the expenditure of such vast sums of money or the selection of so many professionally trained employees. The educational personnel and the general efficiency of our country schools could be vastly improved by following more closely some of the successful examples set by big business. The county superintendent should be chosen by the county board of education, and all school nurses, school supervisors, attendance officers, and clerical assistants should be chosen by the county board of education upon nomination by the county superintendent.

(c) *The Example of the Commission Form of Government.* A few years ago it was the custom for cities to elect by popular vote all their public officials from dog police to mayor. Offices requiring the expert service of civil engineers, sanitary engineers, trained accountants and the like were filled by the men who could get the votes. The best vote getters were often among the least competent to render the skilled service needed by the city.

In September, 1900, the city of Galveston was destroyed by a tidal wave. Rebuilding it was a colossal undertaking. It was a work for skilled experts and for men of large business capacity. The emergency called for a new departure from the customary method of governing cities. The city government was put into the hands of a board of five directors called commissioners. The commissioners were to manage the affairs of the city as the board of directors manage the affairs of a business corporation. When mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, water engineers, sanitary engineers, accountants and other skilled employees were needed, it was the business of the commission to employ the best that could be found anywhere in the country. They were not restricted by the residence requirements of

the days when such employees were chosen by popular election. The recovery of the city was phenomenal. The commission plan worked so well that Houston soon adopted it. With very few exceptions, the cities of less than one hundred thousand population in America today are either operating under the commission plan or under the city manager plan of government.

The commission plan of government has given our cities a much better class of technical and professional employees. A similar plan would produce a much more competent group of professionally trained county school superintendents for the common schools of Texas.

(d) *It Is Not Undemocratic for the County Superintendent to Be Appointed by the County Board of Education.* The demagogue, the man who knows no better, and the weak-kneed politician have often charged that the appointment of the county superintendent by the county board of education is undemocratic. They say it is taking power away from the people. That is a fallacious argument that will not bear the light of logical analysis.

The appointment of the county superintendent by the county board of education is true to the principles of representative democracy. People choose representatives to make laws for them because it is the reasonable and the practical thing to do. A small body of legislators can attend to the law-making needs of society much better than the entire population could do it assembled in one gigantic, tumultuous mass-meeting for that purpose. It has been demonstrated in other states that the people can procure more capable educational leaders for the office of county superintendent through the county board of education as their representatives than they can by direct election. What is good in this respect for the rural schools of Alabama, Delaware, Utah, Maryland, and North Carolina would also be good for the rural schools of Texas.

In a democracy all legislators should be elected by popular vote. Therein resides the sovereignty of the people. It is through the law-making officials that the voice of the people is heard. The lawmakers must be chosen by

direct vote, else there can be no democracy. But with the law-administering officials the case is different. All administrative officials derive their power from the legislature, the temple of the people's sovereignty. Consequently, the people part with none of their sovereignty when they refer the appointment of a non-law-making, or administrative official, to a duly constituted board of the people's representatives such as the county board of education. And experience has taught us that administrative officials requiring technical and professional skill can best be obtained by appointment.

(e) *The County Board of Education Should Have a Free Hand in Choosing the County Superintendent.* When a city is in need of a school superintendent, the city school board is not restricted to the city or to the county in making their choice. They may even go outside of the state if they see fit. The object is to procure the best person available for the position. This would by no means be always possible, if city school boards were restricted by the residence requirements imposed upon the office of county superintendent.

When a business corporation needs a chemist, a bacteriologist, or any other trained expert, its board of directors are not restricted by precinct, county, or state boundary lines. They employ the best person available regardless of where he lives. When a county needs the services of an expert auditor, the county commissioners may employ any person in the state or out of it for that work. But when the common schools of a county are calling for a capable educational expert for the position of county superintendent, the law in Texas requires that he shall be chosen from within the county by popular vote. This is depriving the common school districts of the able educational leadership and direction they might otherwise have. The present method of electing county superintendents is functioning to the disadvantage of the country schools. It should be changed.

The only restrictions that should be placed upon the

county board of education in selecting a county superintendent are the eligibility requirements and the minimum salary prescribed for the office. The eligibility requirements for the office should be so high that none but professionally trained persons could ever hope to fill it. No one should be eligible to appointment as county superintendent unless he is a college graduate who has done special work in educational administration and supervision, and who has had at least five years of experience in the elementary schools. In the state of Delaware, no person is eligible for appointment to the office of county superintendent who does not hold a certificate of administration and supervision from the State Department of Education. Such a requirement would be a good thing for Texas.

There are plenty of educators admirably qualified for the office of county superintendent. But most of those who have the personality, the education and clear understanding of rural needs have gone into city school work. Many of these people would take up county supervision if the political barriers to the office were removed and county supervision placed upon a real professional basis. As a rule, our best educators will not subject themselves to the embarrassment of a political campaign in order to become county superintendent.

The County Board of Education should not even be restricted by the maximum salary limit in the employment of a county superintendent. City school boards are not so restricted in the selection of city school superintendents. They fix the salaries for the superintendents and all the principals and teachers in the school system. Their policy is to agree upon the kind of talent necessary to meet the needs of their schools and then arrange salary schedules that will enable them to secure it. The same policy should obtain in the employing of county superintendents, school nurses, and all special supervisors that have to do with the common schools. This plan is a success in the cities. It has proven equally successful for the counties at large in those states where it has been tried.

It is a fundamental mistake for a County Board of Education to haggle or try to drive a salary bargain when a good man is under consideration. If the estimated cost of living for a county superintendent and his family be $2,500 per year, a salary of $3,500 becomes twice as large in net value to him as a salary of $3,000. Only a few hundred dollars difference in salary will draw a much better grade of man.

The difference between a salary of $3,000 and $4,000 in a county of 20,000 population is a per capita difference in cost of only five cents per year. In a county of 60,000 population it is a per capita difference in cost of only two and two-third cents per year. There are some cities of less than 35,000 population in Texas that pay their school superintendents $5,000 per year. The total wealth of those cities is not nearly so great as the total wealth of the counties in which they are located. The counties are financially able to pay better salaries to the county superintendents than they are now doing. In the opinion of the writer, no county can afford a county superintendent that can be had for less than $3,000.

2. The Method of Electing and Assigning Teachers in the City Schools Compared with the Method of Electing and Assigning Teachers in the Country Schools of Texas

As a rule, the county of 30,000 population in Texas has a few more than one hundred teachers in the country schools. These teachers are employed by the district boards of trustees. There are three trustees to the district. The school districts are so small and so numerous that it is no uncommon thing for a county to have more district school trustees than the total number of teachers employed.

The trustees are elected for two-year terms. The office of school trustee is usually unsought. Too often it is filled by amateurs unaccustomed to the responsibility it entails, and possessing the very crudest sort of educational ideals. They desire good schools, it is true, but they have no clear

conceptions of what a good school ought to be. They are pretty much in the same position that a person would be if he desired to order a bill of goods from a mail-order house but had no catalogue. They select the teachers but they have very poor means of distinguishing the poor ones from the good ones. As a result, teaching positions are often filled with home girls and family acquaintances regardless of their professional fitness.

In the cities the case is quite different. The teachers are usually nominated by the superintendents, and these nominations are generally confirmed by the boards of education. The superintendent knows he will be held responsible for the success or the failure of the school. He knows his success depends very largely upon a competent staff of teachers. Consequently, he can not afford to nominate weak teachers.

Generally, the nomination of a teacher by a superintendent means that the teacher will be duly elected at the next meeting of the board. But that is not always true. If it were, it would make an independent bureaucrat of the superintendent. That is contrary to American political ideals. For that reason, it is best to have the school board function so as to serve as a possible check on the superintendent's authority. At the same time, it would be utter folly to expect the average city school board to elect a competent corps of teachers without the professional advice and guidance of the superintendent.

After the teachers of the city school system have been elected, then comes the problem of their assignment. Some must work in the high school and others in the different grades of the various grammar schools. The assignment of the teachers to their respective positions is a very important thing. The teacher who will succeed in one school may be a complete failure in another. The superintendent usually has a more intimate acquaintance with the needs of all the schools of the city and with the temperament and the qualifications of each teacher than any member of the school board has. For these reasons, in a well-regulated system of city schools, the placement of the teachers is usually left entirely to the superintendent.

Possibly the best method in the United States for the election and assignment of rural teachers is that in the state of Maryland. The teachers are assigned to the various school districts by the county superintendent. But the district board of trustees has the power to refuse to accept the original assignment of any teacher provided for any school under the board's jurisdiction, and upon the notification of such refusal, the county superintendent shall name another teacher for each teacher so refused by the board, provided, however, that the county superintendent shall not be required to name more than three teachers for the same place in any one school.

By this means the nomination and placement of the rural teachers is under the direction and guidance of the county superintendent in a way similar to that in use by the best city school systems. The county superintendent is obliged to recommend teachers to the positions they can fill best, for his success as superintendent depends very largely upon the success of his teachers. Such a plan for Texas would prevent the employment, by some unsophisticated school boards, of many persons who can get teachers' certificates but are otherwise totally unfit for the duties of the schoolroom. It would tend to place each teacher in the position to which she is by nature and education best adapted, and where she could do her best work. It would do much toward the elimination of weak teachers and the raising of the standards of the teaching profession. It has meant much for the betterment of our city schools. It would mean equally as much for the betterment of our country schools.

3. The Superintendent's Clerical and Professional Assistants

The county superintendent stands at the head of the educational system of each county. The teachers are his assistants and co-laborers in the work of education. His relationship to their appointment and assignment has just been discussed. Other necessary assistants are as follows:

(a) *Supervisors.* Every modern city system of schools

has one or more expert supervisors, whose business it is to assist teachers in special subjects, and to deal with certain problems. Certainly if the teachers of the city, who are more mature and better trained, need supervisors, much more do the young and inexperienced teachers of the rural school need this assistance. The county board, upon the recommendation of the county superintendent, should select one or more assistants as supervisors of the teaching in the rural schools. In all counties there should be a primary supervisor and an intermediate supervisor. As funds are made available, music and drawing supervisors should be employed. Supervisors of manual training and home economics and other vocational subjects might be deferred for a time, but surely they too will be needed before the people of the rural schools can be said to have as efficient schools as are to be found in the cities and towns.

(b) *Stenographic Help.* Too often the county superintendent is but little more than an executive office clerk. His power of supervision is merely nominal. Most of the time he should spend inspecting schools, conferring with teachers, trustees and patrons, and otherwise supervising and directing the schools under his jurisdiction is taken up with routine clerical duties that could be discharged by a sixty-dollar office clerk. This is false economy on the part of the state. The office of county superintendent should be provided with the clerical assistance necessary to make it possible for the county superintendent to do the work of school supervision for which the office logically stands. The county school superintendent should spend most of this time out in the field where the country people and the country schools are. He can not do that and attend to all the correspondence, school records and statistical requirements of the office.

(c) *Health Supervisors.* The schools are coming more and more to feel their responsibility for the health of the pupils. During recent years it has been discovered that many pupils who are apparently well but fail to pass their grades, do so because of adenoids, bad tonsils, decayed teeth, defective hearing or some other hidden physical cause

that could be easily corrected by a small amount of medical and surgical attention. By the correcting of small physical defects, many pupils characterized as dull, "not very smart," and the like, are being restored to their normal powers and enabled to keep up with their class mates. This is calling nurses, oculists, dentists and physicians more and more into the service of the schools. The people in all progressive communities understand and appreciate the services they are rendering. But to be thoroughly and systematically done, the work of health inspection and health supervision among all the schools of the county must be directed by the county superintendent.

(d) *Attendance Officers.* The compulsory school attendance laws of Texas have made it necessary for the appointment of attendance officers in some counties. In other counties where the attendance laws are not being well enforced, such officials should be appointed. But the duties of this office are such that there are very few people who are by nature, experience, and education well fitted for it. On that account, some states require that no person be appointed to the position of attendance officer who does not hold a certificate of approval from the State Department of Education. In Texas, such officials should be appointed from an eligibility list certified to by the State Superintendent. Until this is done, the attendance laws will continue to be very loosely enforced in some counties for many years to come. This is especially true in some of the counties where the negro and the Mexican populations are heaviest.

(e) *Recreational Secretary.* Social starvation is driving thousands of country people to town every year. There are fewer opportunities for entertainment and social intercourse in the country now than there were fifty years ago. The times have changed. The quilting bees, corn huskings, house raising, literary societies, singings, etc., once so popular in the country, are no more.

The hunger for social recreation is as natural as the craving for food. Man was not intended for a hermit.

Recreation and social intercourse are essential to his happiness and contentment. The best people will not long remain in a community where these essential needs are not provided for.

The problem of recreation in rural communities is devolving more and more upon the schools. It is at the school that many of the community's social activities naturally belong, and it is through the school that the rural community of the future will have most of its social needs satisfied. The recreational program must have a more definite place in the scheme of rural education for the future. Many of our educators and educational philosophers who are deeply aware of this fundamental need of rural society have never seen it in any very clear and satisfactory manner. Even Mr. E. P. Cubberley in his Utopian state of Osceola fails to make any provision for this need in the ideal scheme of education he sets forth.

Some day in the future—in the near future in some of the more progressive counties—when Texas gets its full quota of people and its full educational development, there will be a recreational secretary working full time and in complete harmony with the county superintendent teaching people better how to enjoy life. Lyceum courses, chautauquas, reading circles, dramatic clubs, community singings, literary organizations; social and athletic organizations, radio phone receivers, and many other activities for the vitalizing of rural community life will be under the guidance of this very important and useful educational expert. There should be a full-time recreational secretary, supported either by private or by public means, in every county in Texas having as many as twenty thousand rural people.

4. The County Superintendent and the County Board of Education Should Make Up the Annual Budget and Should Purchase the Supplies and Equipment Neccessary for the Schools of the County

With an ideally constituted county-unit system, the common schools of Texas could be placed upon a much sounder

and more economical business basis. Most of the plan here proposed is in practical operation in the state of Maryland today.

With the advice and the assistance of the county superintendent, the county board of education should prepare an itemized, detailed budget for the schools of the county each year. The budget should include the amounts necessary for globes, charts, library books, school furniture, apparatus, and other standard supplies for the schools, together with estimates for the salaries of teachers, janitors, attendance officers, and such persons as the successful conduct of the schools may require.

When the itemized bills for the school furniture and the materials of instruction for the common schools of the county have been made, they should be submitted by the county board of education to the school supply companies for bids. This should be done by the county board of education with the advice of the county superintendent and through the county superintendent as its executive agent, for the county superintendent, as a rule, will be better posted on the quality of school supplies and the prices for the same than any member of the board of education.

The school supplies thus purchased should be stored in a school commissary at the county seat. Some clerk in the county superintendent's office should have charge of the school commissary and should issue supplies and equipment to the various schools upon requisitions from the various district school boards approved by the county superintendent. In this way, hundreds of unsuspecting school boards would be protected against the exorbitant prices charged by grafting school supply agents. More than that, the schools would be protected against the wasteful expenditure of much of their funds by misguided school boards for apparatus and equipment ill adapted to their needs. This would mean a saving of thousands of dollars to the free schools of Texas every year. While the school is not a business institution, nevertheless, when the rules of good business are not practiced in its management, education must suffer.

5. The County Superintendent's Relation to the County Board of Education

In an ideal educational system the county superintendent stands in pretty much the same relation to the county board of education that the hired manager does to the board of directors of a business corporation. He is both servant and adviser. He has no inherent authority. The authority he exercises is delegated to him by the board. His chief value to the board is his professional, executive, and managerial ability. Successful business must have labor, capital, and management. So it is with the capital and labor employed in the school system of a county.

The voice and the power of the people reside in the county board of education. The county board of education is the people's board of representatives. It is from the county board of education that the county superintendent derives most of his power. It is his business to carry out the mandates of the board. He is its servant and executive agent.

The county superintendent is also secretary and official adviser of the county board of education. As secretary he should conduct all correspondence, prepare and keep all records, receive all reports required by the board, see that such reports are in the required form, and are complete and accurate. He should have the right to advise on any question under consideration and to make recommendations concerning the same, but no right to vote.

6. The Annual Report of the County Superintendent and the County Board of Education

Communities would do more for their schools if they understood better what their educational needs were. One of the best ways to show the people of a school district where they stand educationally is to compare their schools with the schools of other districts similarly environed. For this purpose, the annual report of the county department of education offers an unparalleled opportunity. But the report should be something more than a financial statement.

If possible, it should contain a picture of each schoolhouse in the county and a brief survey of each school's achievements during the year, together with a concise statement of its condition and needs, and should be published in sufficient quantities for distribution among the citizens..

The annual reports for the schools of Harris County during the administration of Superintendent L. L. Pugh and for Bexar County during the administration of Superintendent P. F. Stewart were of inestimable value to the rural schools of those counties. Each school was given a chance to see itself as it was. For those that were in the lead in equipment, local taxes, school and community activities and the like, these reports stimulated a pride and interest in maintaining the high standards already set. For those that were lagging behind, there was the stimulus to do better.

The "Rural Review" issued by the schools of Runnells County in 1920 is a beautifully illustrated school annual in morocco binding. It is a souvenir such as one might be well pleased to treasure for a lifetime. It contains 221 pages with the pictures of school buildings, school grounds, athletic teams, clubs, classes, societies, student bodies, teachers and trustees. Interspersed among the pictures are cartoons, school yells, school songs, class mottoes, and educational comments from the county superintendent, the state superintendent, the county board of education, and some of the teachers. While this publication is not an official report of the county department of education, it is serving much the same purpose in awakening educational interest and in maintaining educational enthusiasm.

7. The Official Headquarters of the County Department of Education

Too often quarters provided for the county department of education in Texas are neither convenient nor decent. In many instances the office occupied by the county superintendent consists of but one room, and that a small one, which must serve as storeroom for school supplies, as a meeting

place for the county board, and as a general office. Worse still, this cramped and crowded little room is not uncommonly to be found in some obscure nook of the courthouse basement, or more often in the very garret, up two or three long flights of stairs.

If the most important work of the state is the educating of its children, the most important county office is the office of county superintendent. In all county courthouses not equipped with elevators, the county superintendent's office should be given a convenient and comfortable place on the first floor compatible with the dignity and importance of public education. Teachers, women's clubs, and civic, educational and philanthropic organizations in each county of Texas which has slovenly headquarters for the county department of education should go about the active creation of such a sentiment among the citizenry that the county commissioners will be obliged to provide suitable, well furnished rooms for this fundamentally important department of the county government. The deparment should have at least three rooms: a general office; a room for private conferences with teachers, school patrons, and trustees; and a storeroom for school supplies.

CHAPTER IV

THE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

1. *Election and Tenure of Office.* The County Board of Education should consist of not more than five members elected by the qualified voters of the county. A larger number would be undesirable. Experience has proven that small boards and small committees constitute more efficient working bodies than large ones.

The tenure of office should be so arranged as to give stability to the board and continuity to its policies. It would be a mistake for the terms of office of all the members of the board to expire at the same time, leaving the educational affairs of the county in new and inexperienced hands. The term of office should be three years with one-third of the membership of the board elected each year. The election should be held on some other date than the time of the general election and the candidates should be voted upon without regard to their party affiliations. There should be no party designations on the ticket. The object should be to divorce educational matters as far as possible from partisan politics.

Nominations should be made by petitions containing the written names of not less than one hundred qualified voters residing in the county in order to give the candidate a place on the ballot. In general, this plan insures *more capable persons* for local officials than where the ballot is left open to the voluntary announcements of candidates. It eliminates many persons with local interests who have small ability.

In Maryland the members of the County Board of Education are appointed by the governor for terms of six years. In Texas, it occurs to the author that direct election divorced as far as possible from partisan politics, thus emphasizing the dignity and importance of education in the minds of the electorate, is more deisrable than the Maryland plan.

2. *An Ideally Constituted Board.* Mr. M. P. Shawkey, State Superintendent of Public Instruction of West Virginia, in a recent address to the county superintendents of

Arkansas at Little Rock said: "An ideal schoolboard should have in its membership a physician, because of his knowledge of human nature; a banker, for his keenness of perception; a farmer, for his determination; and a real estate man for his imagination. Teachers, preachers, lawyers, politicians, and "tax hawks" should not be put on schoolboards. Teachers are prejudiced, preachers are prone to believe a good Sunday school teacher or a singer in the church choir would make a good school teacher, and lawyers, politicians, and "tax hawks" have too many axes of their own to grind."

Mr. W. E. Chancellor, one of our best authorities on school management, says that the following classes of persons seldom furnish valuable members for boards of education: inexperienced young men, unsuccessful men, politicians, newspaper men, and men in subordinate business positions.

Just here the author begs to differ with Mr. Shawkey and Mr. Chancellor. It is quite possible for the lawyer, the preacher, the newspaper man, or even the man in a subordinate business position to be a most valuable member of a board of education. The only legitimate tests of one's fitness for this important office may be summed up in three propositions: (1) Is the candidate honest? (2) Is the candidate competent? (3) Is the candidate public-spirited? All other tests are fundamentally unsound. If a candidate can successfully meet these three tests, he should in no wise be disqualified because of his professional or business relationships.

Mr. Chancellor is substantially correct when he says that the ideal member of a board of education should be a person accustomed to dealing with bodies of men and with important business interests. He should be able to deal with the business side of education in a big way . . . He should not be frightened just because the totals of bond issues or annual appropriations are large. He should know that one hundred thousand dollars can be spent as economically and as honestly as ten dollars."

3. *Powers and Functions of the County Board of Education.* (a) *Legislative and Judicial Capacity.* The acts of the board should be entirely legislative and judicial, leaving the executive duties to the county superintendent. Legislative duties such as grading and standardizing of rural schools; the establishment of rural high schools; and if the county-unit plan of control were in operation in Texas as it should be, the closing of unnecessary schools and the transportation of children to central schools; the making of an itemized annual budget for the schools of the county outside of the incorporated towns and cities each year; the fixing of the county school tax rate so as to meet the requirements of the budget, provided such rate does not exceed a maximum limit set by law; the purchase of school supplies for all of the schools of the county at wholesale prices; and the apportionment of the state and county school funds among the school districts,* should reside in the county board of education. Such judicial matters as the settlement of minor controversies between two school districts; the determination, upon the advice of the county superintendent, as to whether a school is meeting standard requirements, etc., should also reside in the county board of education. All things of a managerial nature involving expert or professional knowledge should be delegated by the board to the county superintendent. At any rate, this official should be given the power of initiative in the management of such matters as the course of study, the selection of textbooks, and the nomination of teachers.

(b) *The Budget and the Tax Levy.* Each year the board should determine the amount of money necessary for the maintenance of the schools of the county. In all probability the state and local funds will not be sufficient to meet the needs. In that event, the board should, within the limitations of a prescribed maximum tax rate, ascertain the amount of money to be raised by a uniform school tax on all the property in the county taxable for school purposes.

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*See plan of apportionment offered in Chapter I, page 17, of this bulletin.

The power to levy the county school tax should also be lodged in the county board of education. It is but little less than a hollow mockery to give the board the authority to make the annual budget for the schools of the county and then deny it the power of making the tax levy necessary to carry the budget into effect. Yet, this very thing not uncommonly happens. It occurs in the state of Maryland. This practically transfers the control of school finances from the county board of education to the county commissioners. While the county boards of education are held responsible by the law and by the people for the schools, they are in practice deprived of the financial power to meet their responsibility.*

The county board of education can be relied upon as knowing more about the county's educational conditions and needs than the county commissioners. It is an unstatesmanlike error to strip them of so much of their power and usefulness by placing the control of the educational purse strings in the hands of the county commissioners, a body less well informed about the needs of public education.

(c) *Apportionment of Funds Among the Schools of the County.* The apportionment of the state and county school funds to the districts of the county should be delegated to the county board of education. The guiding principle of the board in the distribution of these funds should be the equalization of educational opportunities for children in all parts of the county. A just and practicable plan for the distribution of state and county school funds on the basis of need is proposed in the first chapter of this bulletin.

(d) *Standardizing and Grading of Schools.* With the counsel and advice of the county superintendent, the County Board of Education should grade and standardize all the schools under its control. This should include all the schools of the county outside of the incorporated towns.

The advantage of a graded system of schools may be summarized as follows: (1) It makes each school a well-

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*Flexner and Bachman, Public Education in Maryland, p. 34, published by the General Education Board, 61 Broadway, New York.

defined, integral part of a state school system. A child completing a grade in a standard school should be qualified to enter the grade next above in any standard school in the state system. (2) It makes possible certain economies in school finances and certain important advantages for school children. For example, there is a school of forty-three children. Forty of them are below the seventh grade and three are qualified for the eighth grade. Two teachers can handle the pupils in the grammar grades, provided they do not have to teach the three pupils in the eighth grade. There are not enough high-school pupils in the school to justify the employment of a third teacher, considering the condition of the school's finances. It is unfair to the forty pupils of the grammar grades for the two teachers to take the time justly belonging to them and devote it to the three pupils in the grade above. The teachers should render the greatest possible service to the greatest possible number of pupils at all times. In this instance, the better thing for all concerned is that the County Board of Education classify such a school as a grammar school and provide transportation for the three advanced pupils to the nearest high school. It is better for the forty pupils, inasmuch as they will receive the undivided time and efforts of the two teachers. It is better for the three pupils inasmuch as they will receive real high-school advantages with more teachers, better equipment, and the inspiration that increased numbers and a broader acquaintance always gives. (3) Classification gives each school a chance to know its rank. If a self-centered community, or a backward community thinks its third-class school is one of the first-class, it should be disillusioned by showing it in an official way just where it stands.

(e) *The Establishment of Rural High Schools.* Many rural districts are small in area, in population, and in wealth. These factors bar many school children in Texas from high-school privileges every year. To meet this need, legal provisions for the rural high school have been made. As a rule, each rural high school has to serve more than one district. Consequently, the establishment and control of rural high

schools does not logically fall to any district board of school trustees. It is a natural function of the county board of education. The county board of education, with the advice of the county superintendent, should make a close estimate of the educational needs and possibilities of every school district in the county, designating as rural high schools those whose locations and equipment make it possible for them to serve the greatest number of rural children in the high-school grades.

(f) *Consolidating of Schools.* In general, county boards of education should be given more latitude in such matters as the closing of unnecessary schools, the building of new school houses, and the consolidation of schools. There are many school patrons so uninformed that they do not know how to distinguish a poor school from a good one. For example, the three men who constitute the mouthpiece of a certain deplorably inbred, stagnant rural school district in Texas today, insist that they have a good school. The house is a shoebox affair with a door in the end and three windows on each side. The location is a bleak, wind-swept, rocky glade where it would be dangerous for children to run and play. The interior equipment consists of some home-made benches, a boxstove in the center of the room, a portion of the interior wall painted black for a blackboard, a water pail and a tin dipper. For the sake of thirty innocent children whose future citizenship and success in life are at stake, the life of that benighted school district should be terminated. The doors of its school should be closed and the children put into a big van or automobile bus each morning and hauled to a better school less than two miles away. But that thing can never be done so long as the district, instead of the county, remains the unit of school control.

At another place in Texas, in the very corner of an ill-shaped district, is an old run-down schoolhouse—a relic of pioneer days. But the district school is still conducted there. For many years a sentimental schoolboard has steadfastly refused to see the schoolhouse moved away from the graveyard adjacent to it. There would be no place to conduct funeral services, they say. "If funeral services had to

be conducted in the open at the graveyard, it might rain and get the corpse wet. That would be awful!"

Those men reverence the spot where their friends and deceased ancestors have been buried. It is commendable in them that they do. But which is the more sacred, dead ancestors or live children? Which is the more inalienable, the right to preserve local customs or the right of a human child to an education and a fair chance in life? Which means the more to the future destiny of the nation, the perpetuation of a few extreme notions a few people may have about the theory of local self-government, or a universally well-educated citizenship?

For the sake of economy and the profitable application of our public school funds, and for the sake of a more uniform distribution of educational opportunities to all the children of the land, the county instead of the district, should be made the unit of control in such matters as the establishment of rural high schools, the consolidation of school districts, and the transportation of children to and from school. These advantages are feasible only through a reorganization of the educational resources of each county along good business and educational lines.

(g) *The Election of County School Officials.* The election of all school officials whose authority and influence are of a general nature extending to all the schools of the county, outside of the large independent districts, should be committed to the county board of education as provided in chapter II of this discussion. This should include the county superintendent, supervisors, assistant county superintendent, attendance officers, school nurses, school physicians, and the stenographic and clerical assistants necessary for the efficient conduct of the county superintendent's official duties.

(h) *The Purchase of School Supplies.* Rural schools as well as city schools need teaching apparatus. Good plain maps, good charts, and illustrative materials for the primary grades, good blackboards, sand boards, modeling clay, color materials, a globe, supplies for nature study work, magnifying glasses, a good microscope, simple illustrative

physical and chemical apparatus, bench tools and garden tools, germinating trays, a farm terracing level, a Babcock milk tester; a museum with collections of insects, weed seed, flowers, fossils, etc., peculiar to the district; an oil stove, cooking utensils, a table and a sewing machine; playground apparatus for individual and for group games—these are some of the important equipment a modern rural school should have.

District boards of trustees, as a rule, do not know what apparatus is needed, where to buy it, and what price to pay for it. The writer has seen Hagel's Philosophy, Gibbon's Rome, Darwin's Descent of Man, and even a Masonic Guide in rural school libraries. As previously stated, there should be an estimate made by the county superintendent each year of the kind and amount of standard school equipment needed for all the schools in the county and submitted to the county board of education. Then the board should provide for the purchase of such supplies at reasonable prices and for the establishment of a school commissary at the county seat.* The board should also see that proper provision is made at each school for the care of tools and equipment..

(i) *Summary of the Powers that Should Be Exercised by a County Board of Education.*

1. To elect a county superintendent and fix his salary as is done by city school boards in the case of city school superintendents.

2. Upon the advice and nomination of the county superintendent, to appoint and employ such attendance officers, school supervisors, school nurses, school physicians, and office assistants as the successful conduct of the schools of any county may require.

3. To close unnecessary schools, build new schoolhouses, consolidate schools, convey children to school, classify the elementary schools, and organize rural high schools.

4. With the advice of the county superintendent, to make up the annual school budget for all the schools of the county, outside of the large independent districts, and to levy

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*See page 41 of this bulletin.

a uniform school tax on all the property of the county taxable for school purposes, provided such a tax does not exceed a certain maximum set by law.

5. To expend and apportion all state and county school funds so as to equalize educational advantages for all the children of the county.*

6. To arrange for the coöperative purchasing of supplies and equipment for all the schools of the county under the board's jurisdiction and to provide a store room for the same at the county seat.

7. To issue an annual report of the county department of education.

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*See plan for distribution of state and county school funds set forth in this bulletin, pp. 17-19.

CHAPTER V

THE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

1. *Why the District?* While the public schools of the future must rely more upon state and county taxation for financial support, it would, nevertheless, be exceedingly unwise to abolish all district lines. The school district must remain as a unit of school taxation and to some extent as a unit of school administration. State and county taxes should be used for general maintenance purposes; that is, for teachers' salaries and to meet the minimum requirements set by the state. But should any district desire to maintain higher standards of education than the state and county funds will provide, it should have the privilege of doing so. The district is an essential unit in the school system and should always possess the power to tax itself for new sites, buildings, and equipment commensurate with its civic pride and educational desires.*

2. *Why the District Board of School Trustees?* Since the district must remain as one of the essential units for taxation, some form of administrative machinery within the district is logically necessary. This gives rise to the district board of trustees.

3. *The Election of the District Board of Trustees.* The lack of interest in school trustee elections is quite general in the rural districts of all the states. Better roads, rural free delivery of mail, rural telephones, daily papers, and current magazines are operating to make the farmer a citizen of the world rather than of the school district. At any rate, he seldom goes to the polls and votes for school trustee. For the school year of 1921-1922 forty-eight of the sixty-three functioning trustees in the rural districts of Wichita County were appointed by the county superintendent. Most of these appointments were made because of failures on the part of the school districts to hold school trustee elections.

Indeed, so little interest is taken in the election of trustees in the common school districts, in literally hundreds of places

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*See pages 12 and 13 for a fuller discussion of the district as a taxing unit.

in Texas, that it is not an unusual thing for no election to be held at all. A full vote is seldom polled except in cases where a community is rent with bitter local strife. Under such conditions many of the votes cast are influenced more by prejudice and revenge than by an unbiased desire for the welfare of the schools. For these reasons, some states have seen fit to have all the district trustees appointed by the county board of education. That is true of Alabama, Maryland and North Carolina. In Virginia the district trustees are appointed by the school trustee election board composed of three members. In Louisiana, Delaware, and Utah the county board of education and the county superintendent have charge of all the schools of the county.

4. *Powers and Duties of District Trustees.* (a) *District School Revenues.* All state and county school funds should be apportioned among the districts by the county board of education on the basis of need.* These funds and the required district school tax should be sufficient to meet the required minimum school standards prescribed by the state. But a school that just meets the minimum standards and no more may not be in keeping with a community's pride and educational desires. For this reason districts often vote additional taxes and make further improvements. The expenditure of all funds thus raised logically falls to the district board of trustees.

(b) *The Tax Rate, the School Budget, and the Tax Levy.* The district school tax rate should be flexible. The school's financial needs will vary from year to year. Consequently, the tax rate should vary accordingly. The maximum rate to be levied should be fixed by popular vote. The district trustees should fix and levy such a rate within this maximum as will meet the needs of the school budget each year.

(c) *Custodians of School Property.* Public property is unsafe without a responsible custodian. One of the chief justifications for the board of district school trustees is that the school property may have such a custodian. The care of the school grounds, the maintenance and repair of

*See page 17.

the buildings, and the protection of the library books, apparatus and other school equipment are duties for the district trustees. But too often they do not take this responsibility very seriously. The schoolhouse doors stand open during vacation, the floors and the furniture are damaged by campers and trespassers, and the library books are carried away. It should be a penal offense chargeable to the trustees for an outside schoolhouse door to go unlocked when school is not actually in session, or when the building is not otherwise in use for the general welfare of the community.

(d) *New School Buildings.* The building of a schoolhouse is a new experience to the average trustee in the common school districts. Architects, blue prints, plans and specifications, and building contracts are things foreign to his acquaintance. As a result, the plans of most of the schoolhouses erected by district trustees without the guiding advice and approval of the county superintendent or some other educational expert have been determined more by the needs of the past than by the needs of the present and the future. Untinted walls, bad lighting, poor heating and ventilation, much wasted floor space, no cloak rooms, no plumbing, absence of basements and presence of unused attics are but a few of the errors well-intending school trustees have made in the construction of schoolhouses. No contract for building a school house in a common school district should become legally binding without the approval of the county superintendent.

(e) *The Employment of Teachers.* In one district a teacher was employed because she was in need; in another, because she was a home girl; in another, because she was a member of a certain church; and in yet another, because she could sing in the church choir and teach a Sunday School class, in another because she could be had for forty dollars, and in another because her father was a leading democrat. Politics, religion, and influences of a local nature quite commonly determine the election of teachers. This condition will be perpetuated in many backward communities so long as the district-trustee system of complete control obtains.

Trustees who know no better too often employ teachers whose only stock of educational ideas have been gained through preparation for the county teacher's examination. They are incapable of instructing and guiding children. They have no grasp of modern economic tendencies and no training for rural leadership. But so long as teachers are certificated by academic examinations, we may expect to have some of their kind. The passing of examinations in grammar, arithmetic, spelling and geography is an insufficient test of one's qualifications for the high and responsible office of rural school teacher. But all persons equipped with teacher's licenses look alike to some unsophisticated country school boards.

The country school is a lodge and a rendezvous for the weakest of the weak and inefficient teachers. The direct appointment of teachers by district boards is a hindrance and a menace to education in many country districts. No teacher should be employed by a district board of trustees except upon the nomination and recommendation of the county superintendent. The plan in use in Maryland would be a good one for Texas.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY OF THE ADVANTAGES OF THE COUNTY UNIT SYSTEM OVER THE DISTRICT SYSTEM OF SCHOOL CONTROL

1. Our ablest leaders in education seldom offer for the office of county superintendent. So long as the office remains a political one, it will be a prey to politicians and educational weaklings. By giving the county board of education the power to elect the county superintendent and not restricting them in their choice to the county or even to the state, many of our most capable educators would be attracted intc the work of county school supervision. That would place the office on a professional basis similar to that of city school superintendents, a thing impossible under the present system.

2. Men prepare for city school supervision as a life career. They do not do so for county supervision. When the county unit plan is adopted and the office of county superintendent is placed upon a professional basis, it will become a worth-while inducement to young men of good ability to take college courses in school administration preparatory to county supervision as their life work. The rural schools should be directed by the best supervisory talent of the country.

3. The district as the sole and only taxing area causes untold injustice and inequality in the financing of public education. Some wealthy districts can maintain excellent schools on a low tax levy. Some districts can not even maintain the minimum length of term with the maximum tax levy. If the children of all the people are to be educated, the wealth of all the people must foot the bills. With the county as the unit for school taxation there will be a more equitable distribution of the burden of support and of the opportunities for education throughout the county.

4. No district has the right to produce ignorant citizens to turn loose on the rest of the county. With the county

as the unit of school taxation and administration, society can more securely protect itself against the dangers of crime and ignorance. There are many poverty-stricken communities and backward communities that can never participate in the full joys and benefits of education without the aid and guidance of a strong county administration.

5. The county as the unit of school administration will remove many unfortunate rural schools from the impediments of local jealousies, neighborhood foibles, and close-fistedness that will forever obstruct their progress under the district system of control.

6. The establishment of rural high schools, the locating of new schools and new building sites, and the transportation of pupils to and from school can best be done under the county unit plan.

7. Big men court big responsibilities. Little men shun them. With a greater concentration of responsibility and authority in the county board of education, business and professional men of large caliber would consent to become members of the board. This has proven decidedly true in the case of the commission form of government for cities, and equally true for the good of the common schools where the county unit plan of school management has been tried out.

8. In the average district, the sentiment prevails that any one will do for school trustee. The best men of the community usually prefer not to offer for the office. They look upon it as a thankless job with many annoying little responsibilities too small to engage their time. Were it an office of greater responsibility they would have a different attitude toward it. But as it is, their indifference toward the office is producing many small-caliber trustees lacking the acumen, culture, and powers of leadership that school officials should have.

9. It is better for all the common schools of any county to be under the management of one capable, responsible county board than to be under two or three score of district boards with the crudest sort of educational ideals, their actions controlled very largely by partisan leanings, and with the sense of responsibility to the high cause of educa-

tion resting very lightly upon them. Make a position one of responsibility for the welfare of all the schools of the county and the persons filling it will take their obligations more seriously than if they pertained to one small district only. More than that, you will get better persons for the position.

10. The county superintendent can be a more efficient professional adviser to one board of education responsible for all the schools of the county than he can be to a large number of district boards.

11. The county superintendent and the county board of education can enforce higher standards of qualifications on the part of the teaching staff of the county than is possible when the choice and the employment of the teachers is left to the district trustees. Indeed, every year district trustees employ many persons holding teachers' certificates who would never be inflicted upon an unsuspecting public at all, were their employment left to the county board of education and the county superintendent in the way teachers for city schools are usually nominated and employed. District trustees too often employ teachers just because they have met the legal requirements of a teacher's certificate. To many trustees, all persons holding a teacher's certificate look alike. A teacher's certificate is a very poor evidence of one's ability to teach children and to direct the educational thought of a community.

12. County boards of education are less liable than district boards to such influences as "home girls," "daughters of first families," church affiliations, political creeds, need of employment, local feuds, etc., in the hiring of teachers.

13. The teacher who will succeed in one district may be a rank failure in another. Each teacher should be placed in the position she can fill best. The county superintendent and the county board of education can come nearer placing all the teachers of a county in the positions they fit best than is possible for the district boards of trustees to do. The teaching staff of each county should be placed so as to render the greatest service possible for all the schools of

the county. The Maryland plan of electing and assigning teachers would be a good one for Texas.

14. The district system of control is an example of local-self government carried to the extreme. It is a case of democracy defeating its own ends. The county unit, where it has been tried, produces better results. It is a practicable unit of representative democracy standing for the greatest degree of freedom compatible with the best interest of the greatest possible number of people in an entire county.

15. "The district system is more autocratic than democratic. Because of the failures to hold elections, the superintendent often has to appoint a majority of the trustees. Even when trustees are elected, the vote is often so small as not to be at all representative. The present system of local school control is a case of democracy gone to seed. There is neither wisdom nor democracy in it."

16. By placing all the schools of the county under one board of directors, a great financial saving can be effected. This can be done by purchasing supplies for all the schools in large quantities, by closing some schools and transporting the children to others with better facilities for instruction, and by a more judicious expenditure of all school revenues than is possible under district control and scattered responsibility.

17. What would be the effect on a city school system if each ward elected its own school board and maintained its schools independently of the other wards and schools of the city? It would destroy the central high school, and be a cause for many unnecessary duplications of equipment and expenditures. That is exactly what the country school districts are doing. With the county as the unit, much unnecessary waste could be eliminated.

18. Many counties have more than one hundred school trustees. Under the county system there would be only five. Would it be easier to elect a school board of this lim-

ited number who manifest an interest in popular education than it would to secure one hundred of the same character?

19. The county unit does not call for the abolishing of all districts and district lines. With some possible changes, the districts should remain just about as they are. The country school district always will be an essential taxing unit. There should be some local representative or board of representatives either chosen or appointed for each district to look after the building and to notify the county board of needed supplies. The autonomy of the district must not be destroyed. But many of the prerogatives now exercised by the district should be delegated to the county for their performance just as was done a number of years ago by the cities when they saw the wisdom of bringing all the ward schools into one consolidated, unified system under one centrally organized board of education.

20. The county unit will put the schools of the county on a better business basis. The board would make up the budget necessary for the equal maintenance of all the schools of the county, levy the taxes on the entire wealth of the county, and distribute the proceeds among the schools in an equitable manner. There are great variations in the amounts of taxable wealth in the districts. Some are rich, others are poor. Some districts with large valuations do not have to levy a high tax rate in order to maintain excellent schools. This is especially true in districts having mines, refineries, oil fields, railroads, factories, and other forms of wealth they did not produce. Other districts with low valuations may not be able to equip and maintain decent schools on the maximum rate of levy. The county unit will equalize these differences and make adequate financial support possible for all the districts.

21. School districts in Texas are very ill-shaped and irregular. Many of them have been formed by the process known in politics as gerrymandering. Boundary lines have been made to extend far up and down railroads and far up and down river valleys to enclose desirable taxable property for the benefit of some particular district. This is a most objectionable impediment in the way of a uniformly good

system of schools. So long as the district system remains in control, there will be rich districts and poor districts, good schools and poor schools, and literate sections and illiterate sections side by side in every county of the state. Educational development will continue spotty and uneven. Gerrymandering in the formation of special tax districts always operates to the disadvantages of the less favored localities. County control would cure nearly all the evils that have grown out of this practice.

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